

CLAIMS

1. A register for maintaining data relating to current location of users of a network for use by the network, the register being arranged for coupling to a mate register at a remote location for back up of the data, the register being divided into segments and
5 arranged to carry out a partial handover to the mate register by handing over maintenance of data of one or some of the segments to the mate register temporarily.
2. The register of claim 1, the maintaining involving storing and updating the data and responding to network requests to access the data.
- 10 3. The register of claim 1 comprising a home location register.
4. The register of claim 1, arranged to carry out the handover on a per user basis.
- 15 5. The register of claim 1, the segmentation not being matched at the mate register.
6. The register of claim 1, having a central controller for controlling the handovers and maintaining a map of which users belong to which segment.
- 20 7. The register of claim 1 arranged to carry out the partial handover for a given one of the users by sending a message to the mate register, setting the user's status to standby and diverting to the mate register any requests from the network to access the data for that user.
- 25 8. The register of claim 1 arranged to receive a handover request from the mate register for a given one of the users, to set a user's status to active, and to respond to any requests from the network to access the data for that user.
- 30 9. The register of claim 1 arranged to initiate a handback operation for a given one of the users, by requesting a copy of the data from the mate register, and once received, setting the user's status to active, and responding to any requests from the network to access the data for that user.

10. The register of claim 1 arranged to respond to a handback request from the mate register for a given one of the users, by sending a copy of the data to the mate, setting the user's status to standby, and diverting to the mate register any requests from the network to access the data for that user.

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11. The register of claim 10 arranged to respond to the handback request only when any transaction has ceased.

12. The register of claim 1 arranged to cease backing up data with the mate register after a handover has been initiated.

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13. The register of claim 1, arranged to request a full copy of data from the mate register for users of the handed over segment for whom the mate register is normally in an active state.

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14. The register of claim 1 implemented in the form of software.

15. A method of maintaining data relating to current location of users of a network for use by the network, the register being arranged to be coupled to a mate register at a remote location for back up of the data, the method having the steps of dividing the register into segments, and carrying out a partial handover to the mate register by handing over maintenance of data of one or some of the segments to the mate register temporarily.

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16. Another aspect provides a method of offering a communications service over a network having the register of claim 1.

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17. A sequence of signals between a register used for maintaining data relating to current location of users of a network for use by the network, and a mate register at a remote location for back up of the data, the register being divided into segments, the sequence comprising a signal from the register carrying out a partial handover to the mate register of maintenance of data of one or some of the segments temporarily, and a signal from the mate register for handing back the maintenance.

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18. A sequence of signals between a user and a register used for maintaining data relating to current location of users of a network for use by the network, the register being coupled to a mate register at a remote location for back up of the data, the register being divided into segments, and arranged to carry out a partial handover to the
- 5 mate register by handing over maintenance of data of one or some of the segments to the mate register temporarily, the sequence comprising a signal from the user to indicate its identity and current location, and a signal from the register to authorize use of the network.